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REMARKS

This amendment is responsive to the Office Action dated December 5, 2003. Applicants have amended claims 8, 11, 13-17, 20, 21, 23 and 25 and canceled claims 1-7, 18-19, and 27-28. Claims 8-17 and 20-26 are now pending.

The Examiner indicated that claims 11, 12 and 23 would be allowable.

In the Office Action, the Examiner objected to claims 11, 12, and 23 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants have amended independent claims 11 and 23 to include all of the limitations of the respective base claims and any intervening claims. Claim 12 is dependent on claim 11.

Claims 11, 12, and 23 are now in condition for allowance.

The Suzuki reference lacks any teaching of lapping.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 8, 9 and 17-20 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Suzuki et al. (US 5,015,430) (hereafter Suzuki). Independent claims 8 and 17 recite lapping units that lap magnetic tape strands. In particular, independent claims 8 and 17 have been amended to clarify that first and second sets of magnetic tape strands comprise strands cut from a wide roll of magnetic tape. Independent claims 8 and 17 require a first lapping unit to lap the first set of magnetic tape strands and a second lapping unit to lap the second set of magnetic tape strands.

In rejecting these claims, as originally filed, the Examiner cited a specific passage of Suzuki, at column 3, lines 27-33. In that passage, Suzuki states "the magnetic tapes may be subjected to various other types of processing such as polishing the magnetic layers of the tapes by polishing rolls, hard blades, or the like prior to smoothing."

Polishing rolls and hard blades, however, are not lapping units that lap magnetic tape strands, as claimed. Nevertheless, in the interest of expediting prosecution toward issuance, Applicants have further amended the independent claims 8 and 17 to clarify that each of the first and second lapping units include at least one lapping film that moves in a direction opposite motion of the first and second sets of magnetic tape strands respectively. As amended, claims 8

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and 17 clearly distinguish Suzuki. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of all pending claims.

Dependent claims 9 and 20 recite that the lapping units adjustably engage the magnetic tape strands. Applicants respectfully submit that the features of dependent claims 9 and 20 are clearly lacking from Suzuki. In particular, the mere mention of polishing rolls and hard blades does not suggest the use of lapping units whatsoever, much less lapping units that adjustably engage the magnetic tape strands. For this additional reason, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of claims 9 and 20.

The applied references do not disclose or suggest lapping units to lap the top and bottom sides of magnetic tape strands.

Dependent claim 15 further recites lapping units that respectively lap top and bottom sides of the magnetic tape strands. The Examiner rejected claim 15 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Suzuki in view of Schlatter et al. (US 5,658,618) (hereafter Schlatter). However, Applicants can find nothing in either Suzuki or Schlatter that would have suggested lapping of the top and bottom sides of magnetic tape strands. For this additional reason, Applicants believe claim 15 should be allowed.

The applied references do not disclose or suggest adjustably engageable wiping units or wiping units that are inline with lapping units.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 10, 13-16, 21 and 22 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Suzuki in view of Schlatter. For the reasons outlined above, however, Applicants believe that this rejection should be withdrawn. In particular, neither Suzuki nor Schlatter discloses or suggests the use of lapping units as recited in independent claims 9 and 17.

Applicants also believe that dependent claims 10, 16, 21 and 22 recite additional features that are not disclosed or suggested in any of the applied references. For example, claims 10, 16 and 21 recite lapping units and wiping units that lap and wipe the magenetic tape strands respectively. Without any suggestion of lapping in either Suzuki or Schlatter, it is unclear how a

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person with ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to perform both lapping and wiping in view of these references.

Moreover, claim 22 requires both the lapping and wiping units adjustably engage respective magnetic tape strands. Not only do the applied references lack any suggestion of inline lapping and wiping, but such references clearly lack any suggestion of lapping and wiping units that are adjustably engageable. For example, the wiping roll 13 of Schlatter, which was relied upon by the Examiner, does not appear to be adjustably engageable. Instead, the wiping roll 13 appears to be statically positioned and, therefore, not adjustably engageable.

Applicants respectively submit that dependent claims 10, 16, 21 and 22 should be allowed for these additional reasons.

The applied references lack any teaching of tension control for individual magnetic tape strands.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 24-26 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Suzuki in view of Meohofer (US 4,159,808) (hereafter Meohofer). In particular, the Examiner stated that Meohofer discloses independent tension control that includes magnetic clutch mechanisms. The Examiner reasoned that it would have been obvious to modify the teaching of Suzuki with the tension control taught in Meohofer.

One problem with this analysis, however, is that Meohofer discloses tension control for a full web, not individual tension control for each of the individual magnetic tape strands. For example, FIG. 1 of Meohofer, relied upon by the Examiner, clearly shows a single magnetic clutch mechanism which controls tension of the full web. As outlined in Applicants' specification, however, the inline cutting and lapping can be improved by individual tension control for each of the tape strands. See page 16, lines 17-23. Applicants respectively submit that claims 24-26 are patentably distinguishable from the magnetic clutch mechanism shown in Meohofer insofar as these claims require individual tension control for each of the tape strands rather than the single tension control mechanism of Meohofer that controls tension of the full web.

In fact, Meohofer is primarily concerned with motion of a web of paper or plastic, not magnetic tape. Accordingly, Meohofer clearly lacks any suggestion of individually cut tape

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strands that are cut from a wide roll, much less different tension control for each of the individually cut tape strands. Applicants respectfully request allowance of claims 24-26 for these additional reasons.

Conclusion

For the various reasons outlined above, Applicants believe that all claims in this application are in condition for allowance. Applicants do not acquiesce to any of the Examiner's characterizations of the applied references with respect to the features recited in Applicants' claims, and reserve the right to address features of other dependent claims at a later date.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and prompt allowance of all pending claims. Please charge any additional fees or credit any overpayment to deposit account number 09-0069. The Examiner is invited to telephone the below-signed attorney to discuss this application.

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